

Grinnell College, IA, USA

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**The Aspiring for More project: Inspiring the youth of Jamestown to create and achieve life goals
July 3rd – August 11th, 2017; Ghana**

Project Details:

Jamestown is a popular tourist site in Ghana's capital, Accra, made up of picturesque beaches and luxury hotels. Many of its natives work as anglers or sellers at the nearby Makola Market but can barely make ends meet. Although most children of school age are enrolled in neighboring public schools, many do not go beyond Junior High School (JHS) because they are either distracted by the bustling economic activity and opportunity to make "quick" money through illegal means such as Internet defrauding/ petty theft or they face financial challenges. In addition, girls became impregnated soon after completing JHS. The high illiteracy and crime rates among the youth threatens peace in the area.

Generally, schoolchildren from Jamestown have a negative attitude towards education and think it to be a waste of time. Ultimately, they become dropouts, engage in illegal activities or start a family and eventually end up becoming fishers, fishmongers or sellers, continuing the cycle of poverty. Over the years, many young people have accepted this cycle and have failed to break away from it. For example, many children do not believe they can become doctors simply because they come from poor homes or because no one in their family or community has achieved that feat. I believe this negative approach to education accounts for the poverty, crime and low educational achievement in this area. I also believe that giving the students the necessary knowledge and tools will enable them terminate the vicious cycle that leads to poverty and instability.

In February – July 2016, I started an organization called the Angels Project with four other High School graduates in Accra. The aim of this organization was to reach out to school children in the Makola Market area and discuss with them the importance/value of education. It was during this time I thought of a sustainable way of helping out the students of this area besides regular interactions. The aim of this Davis Peace Project is to encourage and equip Junior High School students from Jamestown and other neighboring communities with the required knowledge and tools to aspire to reach high levels in education. This project will take place in four Basic Schools in the Makola Market Area. It will be in two phases. The first phase will include purchasing of books (especially motivational books), three computers and one internet router for each school's library. These will be used as tools to encourage reading, facilitate schoolwork and inspire students.

The second phase will be a two-week seminar for Junior High School students from the selected schools and their teachers at the University of Ghana- Legon during the summer break. The seminar will include inspiring talks by a MasterCard Scholar, an Assistant Professor at the University cum Life Coach and a Registered Nurse. The presentations will address issues such as peer pressure, sexual and reproductive health, improving studying habits and setting life goals. The seminar will also include reading and analysis of books and movies as well as a computer literacy classes for both teachers and students. Also, information about scholarships such as the Mwana Scholarship Fund which is funded by the African Caribbean Students' Union at Grinnell College and the MasterCard Foundation Scholarship will be given.

This project will serve the dual purpose of lowering school dropout rate, and inspiring students to aspire and achieve more through education thus, breaking the vicious cycle that leads to poverty and instability by providing them with tools and knowledge. With students who aspire to achieve the best they can through education, the youth of Jamestown will have a chance at a better future.

Project Timeline:

¹http://www.ibe.unesco.org/National_Reports/ICE_2004/ghana.pdf

²<http://www.mastercardfdn.org/scholars-program/>

The **first phase** (July 3 - July 28 2017) of the project will consist of two parts. 1) Preparation for the seminar: The seminar will be held at the University of Ghana in Legon, Accra. This venue was chosen to fuel the students' interest to attain higher levels of education. The Schools, speakers, managers of the venue and a registered nurse have all been contacted and have shown great enthusiasm to join the project. The participating schools are Queen Elizabeth Memorial School, Private Ordartey-Lamptey Basic School, Bishop Girls School and Bishop Mixed School. 2) Purchasing motivational books, three computers and an internet router for each school. This will be done in Accra. Most of the books that will be purchased will be motivational booklets and/or books penned by African authors to fuel students' interest in African literature and inspire them. Computer software such as Mavis Beacon and Antivirus will be purchased for each computer. Also a booklet with information about scholarships will be printed for the Libraries.

The **second phase** (July 31 - August 11) will be a two-week seminar at the University of Ghana. It will be attended by thirty-five (35) students and three (3) teachers from each school. The first week will consist of presentations, workshops and group discussions. The second week will focus on computer literacy. The students will be put into groups and encouraged to work together and learn from one another while individually thinking for themselves. Activities at the seminar will include book reading and film analysis, pop quizzes, tête-à-tête (an activity where students ask whatever is on their minds), group presentations and more. These activities will ensure that the students think deeply about what that are being exposed to at the seminar and become familiar with working small groups in a way that is engaging.

Expected Outcome:

It is expected that at the end of the project:

- ✓ each student will be able to set their life goals, identify good study habits, learn how to develop talents, acquire important attitudes to face life challenges, use the internet and computers positively and effectively, stay focused on school and apply for aid to finance education if needed.
- ✓ each student will also learn skills such as teamwork, presentation, critical thinking, and effective note taking at the seminar.
- ✓ apart from gaining knowledge from the books donated, students will cultivate a reading culture, which will broaden their minds and expand their vocabulary. Words they do not understand can be searched in dictionaries or the computer which will be donated to their Schools' Library
- ✓ students will be more conscious about their sexual health and will be willing to ask questions and seek information about it.

Sustainability:

The internet router will be purchased at a Vodafone office at the Makola Market. In addition, a bank account will be created for each school with a fixed deposit of \$548.75 at the Agricultural Development Bank, which has an interest rate of 5.0% for the payment of internet connectivity. The cost of internet is \$10 per month (about 40 Ghanaian Cedi).

Teachers will continue to use the system of critically analyzing materials in the classroom. The schools have assured us that they would assign readings from the books donated to the students and would encourage group discussions and presentations of readings. Also a typed analysis will be submitted by students to their teachers so that students can practice their typing skills. Students who show seriousness in this activity will be awarded extra credit at the end of each term.

Applicant:

Angela A. Frimpong is an Intended Biochemistry Major with a concentration in Global Development Studies. She is from Ghana, West Africa and is fluent in English and Akan. Important Partner of Applicant - Bennet Nii Akwei Brown – Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Kumasi, Ghana